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THE RANI OF SIRMUR: AN ESSAY IN READING THE ARCHIVES*

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

Two years ago, when a conference with the title "Europe and Its Others" was proposed by the Sociology of Literature Group at Essex, I made some pious remarks about an alternative title, namely, "Europe as an Other." It has since then seemed to me that the proposed revision was ill-considered in at least two ways. First, it ignored the fact that the history and the theory that such a conference would want to expose are precisely those of how Europe had consolidated itself as sovereign subject by defining its colonies as "Others," even as it constituted them, for purposes of administration and the expansion of markets, into programmed near-images of that very sovereign self. Second, the proposed revision nostalgically assumed that a critique of imperialism would restore a sovereignty for the lost self of the colonies so that Europe could, once and for all, be put in the place of the other that it always was. It now seems to me that it is this kind of revisionary impulse that is allowing the emergence of the "Third World" as a convenient signifier.

If instead we concentrated on documenting and theorizing the itinerary of the consolidation of Europe as sovereign subject, indeed sovereign and subject, then we would produce an alternative historical narrative of the "worlding" of what is today called "the Third World." To think of the Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation helps the emergence of "the Third World" as a signifier that allows us to forget that "worlding," even as it expands the empire of the discipline.[1]

I. METHODOLOGICAL PREAMBLE

Indeed "The Third World" is offering an entire privileged discursive *field* within metropolitan radical criticism. In that field, "The Third World *Woman*" is a particularly hallowed signifier. In this essay, I trace the difficulties in fixing such

* This paper was presented at the 1984 Essex Conference, "Europe and Its Others," the proceedings of which will be published in two volumes by the University of Essex in October 1985.

1. Since this is a part of a longer manuscript, I have occasionally quoted slightly emended passages from other chapters of the book (*Master Discourse, Native Informant*, Columbia University Press, forthcoming) to secure the argument. I have not always indicated this.

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a signifier as an object of knowledge. "The Third World Woman" in the case is the Rani of Sirmur.

One of the major difficulties with consolidating a figure from the British nineteenth century in India as an object of knowledge is that British India is now being painstakingly constructed as a cultural commodity with a dubious function. The deepening of the international division of labor as a result of the new micro-electronic capitalism, the proliferation of worldwide neocolonial aggression, and the possibility of nuclear holocaust encroach upon the constitution of the everyday life of the Anglo-US. The era of *Pax Britannica*, caught in a superrealistic lyrical grandeur on television and on film, provides that audience at the same time with a justification of imperialism dissimulated under the lineaments of a manageable and benevolent self-criticism.

The contemptuous spuriousness of the project can be glimpsed on the most superficial level, if we contrast it, for example, to that of the US "nostalgia film," which Fredric Jameson has described as a "well-nigh libidinal historicism." Jameson finds "the 1950's" to be "the privileged lost object of desire . . . for Americans," at least partly because they signify "the stability and prosperity of a pax Americana." Speaking of "the insensible colonization of the present by the nostalgia mode" in a film such as *Body Heat*, Jameson observes: "the setting has been strategically framed, with great ingenuity, to eschew most of the signals that normally convey the contemporaneity of the United States in its multinational era . . . as though [the narrative] were set in some eternal thirties, beyond real historical time."[2] No such ingenuity is needed in the case of the spurious simulacrum of imperial India. The rural landscape of *Gandhi*, comfortably masquerading as the backdrop of the Raj, is in fact the unretouched landscape of rural India today.

It is against these disciplinary and cultural tendencies of representation that I propose a "reading" of a handful of archival material, bits of "the unprocessed *historical record*."[3] How should one reconcile this with the fact that, within the discipline of history, influential figures like Dominick LaCapra and Hayden White are questioning a privileging of the archives?

> That language . . . is the *instrument of mediation* between the consciousness and the world that consciousness inhabits [White writes with some derision] . . . will not be news to literary theorists, but it has not yet reached the historians buried in the archives hoping, by what they call a "sifting of the facts" or "the manipulation of the data," to find the form of the reality that will serve as the object of representation in the account that they will write "when all the facts are known" and they have finally "got the story straight."[4]

In that a hegemonic nineteenth-century European historiography has designated the archives as a repository of "facts," and I propose that they should be

2. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984), 66–68.

3. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973), 5.

4. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), 125–126.

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"read," my position can be consonant with White's. The records I read show the soldiers and administrators of the East India Company constructing the object of representations that becomes the reality of India. On a somewhat precious register of literary theory, it is possible to say that this was the construction of a fiction whose task was to produce a whole collection of "effects of the real," and that the "misreading" of this "fiction" produced the proper name "India."

As a disciplinary literary critic, I am skeptical of White's privileging of literary criticism. To reveal the ineluctably poetic nature of historical work no doubt redresses the balance in the discipline of history.[5] Such a suggestion would carry weight, however, if it were made from a perspective equally knowledgeable about the specificity of the study of history and the study of literature as institutionalized disciplines. It is interesting to note that, alongside the careful (narrative) history of history, historiography, and philosophy of history *within the disciplinarization* of history in "The Absurdist Moment in Contemporary Literary Theory," White presents a loose-knit taxonomy of the development of recent literary criticism, quite outside of the history of its institutionalization. He ends up by taking at face value the American New Critics, whose ideological effigy still rules our discipline. This allows him to arrive at a point where he can speak of the "moral" and the "aesthetic" as if they were a matter of mere preference as to choice of ground.[6]

Perhaps because he profited from White's pathbreaking work and a more benign exposure to Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan, Dominick LaCapra's position seems at once bolder and more tempered. He too "urges the intellectual historian to learn of developments in . . . literary criticism and philosophy." But he is also aware that

> at present, more experimental forms of literary criticism, when they do not replace older types of formal or "new" criticism, threaten to remain on the level of delicate miniatures. . . . "History" itself may be invoked as an extremely abstract, indeed intemporal, category either to defend or to reproach more formal and micrological methods of criticism. Or the "contexts" that are called upon to flesh out an interpretation may be the outgrowth of wild speculation rather than careful research.[7]

Yet LaCapra also cautions against enthusiastic and uncritical "archivism," its

> indiscriminate mystique . . . which is bound up with hegemonic pretensions. . . . The archive as fetish is a literal substitute for the "reality" of the past which is "always already" lost for the historian. When it is fetishized, the archive is more than the repository of traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself—an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing or other inscriptions.[8]

5. White, *Metahistory*, xi.
6. *Ibid.*, xii.
7. Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, NY, 1983), 344.
8. LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), 92, n. 17.

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I find these admonitions just. LaCapra produces them, however, in defense of the (Western) historian's consideration of "great works." I suggest that "great works" of *literature* cannot easily flourish in the fracture or discontinuity which is covered over by an alien legal system masquerading as law as such, an alien ideology established as the only truth, and a set of human sciences busy establishing the "native" as self-consolidating other ("epistemic violence"). For the early part of the nineteenth century in India, the literary critic must turn to the archives of imperial governance as her text. As in many other cases, in other words, the introduction of the thematics of imperialism alters the radical arguments. "Often the dimensions of the document that make it a text of a certain sort with its own historicity and its relations to sociopolitical processes (for example, relations of power)," LaCapra writes, "are filtered out when it is used purely and simply as a quarry for facts in the reconstruction of the past."[9] Even so modest a consideration of the construction of the object of imperialism as the present essay cannot be guilty of that error.

Perhaps my intent is to displace (not transcend) the mere reversal of the literary and the archival implicit in much of LaCapra's work. To me, literature and the archives seem complicit in that they are both a crosshatching of condensations, a traffic in telescoped symbols, that can only too easily be read as each other's repetition-with-a-displacement.

In a slightly different context, rethinking intellectual history, LaCapra proposes that the "relation between practices in the past and historical accounts of them" is "transferential"; and adds, "I use 'transference' in the modified psychoanalytic sense of a repetition-displacement of the past into the present as it necessarily bears on the future."

The transference-situation in analysis is one where the tug-of-war of desire is at work on both sides—on the part of both the analysand and the analyst. Both come to occupy the subject-position in the uneven progressive-regressive exchange. The task of the "construction" of a "history" devolves on both. To wish to replicate this in disciplinary historiography might simply mark the site of a radical version of the academic intellectual's desire for power. This desire can be located in the slippage between the suggestion that the relation between past practices and historical accounts is transferential, and, as LaCapra goes on to say in four paragraphs—the suggestion that, however difficult it might be—a "transferential relation" must be "negotiate[d] critically."[10] In the first position, the historian uneasily occupies the couch. In the second, the logic of the analogy would make the historian share the responsibility of the analyst. The distance covered by the slippage between these two positions is precisely the metaphor of the "cure." Although I am generally sympathetic with LaCapra's use of the transference-model in disciplinary critique and the critique of the *mentalité*-school of historiography, I cannot overlook the fact that to dissimulate the space of the "cure" disqualifies any methodological analogy

9. LaCapra, *Rethinking*, 31.
10. *Ibid.*, 72–73.

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taken from transference. I have argued elsewhere, writing directly on psychoanalytic *literary* criticism, that this disqualification is perhaps irreducible.[11] The psychoanalytic metaphor for transformative disciplinary practice in the human sciences will always remain a catachresis.

LaCapra is too sophisticated a thinker not to suspect this. In the place of this catachresis he offers us a "fiction": "It is a useful critical fiction to believe that the texts or phenomena to be interpreted may answer one back and even be convincing enough to lead one to change one's mind."[12] If the "past" is an *absolute* "other," this "useful fiction" might track the mechanics of the construction of the *self-consolidating* other—a history that is in some sense a genealogy of the historian. What is marked is the site of a desire. I need not belabor the point.

Here too the situation of the post-colonial critic of imperialism undermines the argument. The point of this essay is to inspect soberly the absence of a text that can "answer one back" after the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project.

In much the same way, the critique of imperialism must be differentiated from Fredric Jameson's current enterprise—without pretending, of course, to the extreme subtlety of his technique.

Of his own approach, Jameson writes: "It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity."[13] We cannot privilege the narrative of history-as-imperialism as such an originary text, a "fundamental history." Our task is more circumscribed: first, to indicate that, even in varieties of radical critique, that narrative is reduced out; and second, to suggest that the narrative of history-as-imperialism should be at least irreducible. Otherwise the willed (auto)biography of the West masquerades as disinterested history, even when the critic presumes to touch its unconscious.[14]

I must confess that I have not been able to stop tinkering with bits of Freudian vocabulary. As far as I am able to understand my own practice, I do so

11. Spivak, "The Letter as Cutting Edge," in *Literature and Psychoanalysis: Reading Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore, 1982), 208–226.

12. LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 73.

13. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as A Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY, 1981), 20.

14. Hayden White has his version of an uninterrupted narrative whose fundamental history must be restored: it is the history of consciousness itself, "the deep [tropologically progressivist] structure of the historical imagination," "the single tradition of historical thinking." Everything proceeds here as if the sign "consciousness" has no history, no geopolitical specificity. (*Metahistory*, ix, x.)

In order to put together his theory of the "political unconscious" as the vast container of the uninterrupted narrative of fundamental history, Fredric Jameson also taps psychoanalysis. He constructs an adequate analogy between the Lacanian subject-model/discursive-orders of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real on the one hand, and the functioning of text and history on the other. It is Dominick LaCapra who has, in my view, successfully analyzed this problematic maneuver, suggesting that this is to misappropriate Lacan in rather a serious way (*Rethinking*, 245–251).

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in order to borrow an interpretative morphology and a powerful metaphorics, not to construct a collective sociopolitical Subject, nor yet to find an analogy for reading in the analytical situation. More about this later. The field of Third World criticism has become so quickly fraught that another methodological caution must here be advanced: In the United States the Third Worldism currently afloat in humanistic disciplines is often openly ethnicist or primitivist. I was born in India and received my primary, secondary, and tertiary education there, including two years of graduate work. My Indian example could thus be seen as a nostalgic investigation of the lost roots of my own identity. Yet even as I know that one cannot freely enter the thickets of "motivations," I would maintain that my chief project is to point out the positivist-idealist variety of such nostalgia entertained by academics in self-imposed exile. I turn to Indian material because, in the absence of advanced disciplinary training, that accident of birth and education has provided me with a *sense* of the historical canvas, a hold on some of the pertinent languages that are useful tools for a *bricoleur*—especially when she is armed with the Marxist skepticism of "concrete experience" as the final arbiter and with a critique of disciplinary formations. The Indian case cannot be taken as representative of all countries, nations, cultures, and the like that may be invoked as the Other of Europe as Self. This caution seems all the more necessary because, at the other end, studies of the English, French, and German eighteenth century are still repeatedly adduced as *representative* of the emergence of *the* ethical consensus—and studies of Emerson, Thoreau, and Henry Adams advanced as a study of the *American* mind.

II. THREE RANDOM EXAMPLES OF OTHERING

To set the stage for the Rani of Sirmur, let us consider three examples from the collections of "Proceedings"—dispatches, letters, consultations moving at the slow pace of horse, foot, ships laboriously rounding the Cape, and the quill pens of writers and copyists—surrounding the half-forgotten maneuvers of the "Settlement" of the many states of the Simla Hills in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. This is the Highland scrub country of the lower Himalayas between Punjab proper on the West, Nepal and Sikkim on the East, and what was to be named the North-West Provinces—today's Uttar Pradesh—in the South. The country lies between the two great rivers Sutlej and Yamuna, and there are thus two valleys tucked in between the scrub, the Kaardah and the Dehra Valleys or Doons. The many kings of these Hills had lived out a heterogeneous and precarious equilibrium surrounded by the militarily and politically energetic Sikhs of the Punjab and Gurkahs of Nepal and by those relatively distant "paramount powers," the Mughal Emperor and the Pathan King of Delhi, the latter through his proxy the Nazim of Sirhind. It is a fantastic centuries-old scene of the constant dispersal of the space of power, with representations of representation operating successfully though not taking anyone in as the representation of truth—and above all, animated by no desire

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to compete with those four greater surrounding powers. When therefore, on August 2, 1815, David Ochterlony writes in secret consultation to the Governor-General-in-Council: "The aggression of the Goorkahs compelled us to have recourse to arms *in vindication of our insulted honour*," most of the Hill-states were not, indeed could not be, particularly forthcoming in partisanship.[15] This provided the East India Company with the right to claim entitlement to the settlement of the states.

This minimal account is necessary to introduce my first example, which comes from the pen of Captain Geoffrey Birch (an assistant agent of the Governor) writing to Charles Metcalfe, the Resident at Delhi. Metcalfe sends a copy to John Adam, the Governor's Secretary at Fort William in Calcutta. The time is the end of 1815. The copy of the letter from young Geoffrey Birch (he is twenty-nine at this point, having been born in a petty merchant's family in Middlesex just before the French Revolution) is taking its time travelling five-hundred odd miles across the Indo-Gangetic plains from Resident in Delhi to Governor's Secretary in Calcutta. Birch in the meantime is advancing his career, riding about in the Hills with a single native escort—a slight romantic figure if encountered in the pages of a novel or on the screen. He is actually engaged in consolidating the self of Europe by obliging the native to cathect the space of the Other on his home ground. He is worlding *their own world*, which is far from mere uninscribed earth, anew, by obliging *them* to domesticate the alien as Master.

The worlding of a world on uninscribed earth alludes to Heidegger's essay "The Origin of the Work of Art."[16] Fredric Jameson's reference to the Heideggerian text in his essay on postmodernism points up the irreducible fracture between the production of Anglo-European social semiosis and the semiosis of imperialism. Jameson, correctly following Heidegger, writes: "Heidegger's analysis . . . is organized around the idea that the work of art emerges within the gap between the earth and the world."[17] By contrast, when the Heideggerian concept-metaphor of earth and world is used to describe the imperialist project, what emerges out of the violence of the rift (*Riss* in Heidegger has the violent implication of a fracture—"fighting of the battle," "the intimacy of opponents"—rather than the relatively "cool" connotation of a gap) is the multifarious thingliness [*Dinglichkeit*] of a represented world on a map, not merely "the materiality of oil paint affirmed and foregrounded in its own right" as in some masterwork of European art, being endlessly commented on by philosopher and literary critic.[18] What I am trying to insist on here is that the agents

15. Board's Collections 1819–1820. Extract Bengal Secret Consultations. All archival sources consulted are at the India Office Library in London.

16. Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. A. Hofstadter (New York, 1971), 17–87.

17. Jameson, "Postmodernism," 59.

18. Heidegger, "Origin," 49, 63. Jameson, "Postmodernism," 59. It should be noted that Heidegger's attitude toward this "struggle" is benign, since he *is* speaking of the work of art. My (necessarily false) analogy is substituting colonized space as a phantasmatic "earth." This does not,

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of this cartographic transformation in the narrow sense are not only great names like Vincent Van Gogh, but small unimportant folk like Geoffrey Birch, as well as the policymakers. I am also suggesting that the necessary yet contradictory assumption of an uninscribed earth which is the condition of possibility of the worlding of a world generates the force to make the "native" see himself as "other."

George III required of his Cadet only that "he [be] well-grounded in Vulgar Fractions, write . . . a good Hand, and [have] gone through the Latin Grammar."[19] The Military Committee of the East India Company went by the same rules. With this intellectual preparation and thirteen years of soldiering (he joined when he was sixteen) Captain Birch is effectively and violently sliding one discourse under another. His letter carries these words, by no means singular in that era and in those contexts: "[I have undertaken this journey] to acquaint the people who they are subject to, for as I suspected they were not properly informed of it and seem only to have heard of our existence from conquering the Goorkah and from having seen a few Europeans passing thro' the country."[20] Birch on horseback passing through the country sees himself as a representative image. By his sight and utterance rumor is being replaced by information, the figure of the European on the hills is being reinscribed from stranger to Master, to the sovereign as Subject with a capital S, even as the native shrinks into the consolidating subjected subject in the lower case. The truth value of the stranger is being established as the reference point for the true (insertion into) history of these wild regions.

Let Captain Birch as agent of determination remain a reminder that the "Colonizing Power" is far from monolithic—that its class-composition and social positionality are necessarily heterogeneous.

My second example is from a letter in secret consultation from Major-General Sir David Ochterlony, Superintendent and Agent to the Governor-General-in-Council, written to John Adam, the Governor's Secretary. By contrast to Birch, General Ochterlony was a gentleman and cordially hated the hill people. He is the kind of person one imagines in the first flush of enthusiasm against Imperialism. His letter contains these memorable words, again not unusual from a man of his station. The nice antithetical balance reminds one in fact of certain nineteenth-century novels on the topic of imperialism as social mission: "Mr. Fraser . . . considers these Highlanders as having the germs of all virtue, and I see them only possessing all the brutality and purfidy [sic] of

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however, reduce the importance of the notion of conflict and struggle in the Heideggerian imagining of the *Riss*. Compare, for example, the orchestration of the word *Streit* (conflict/strife) in the German sentences from which my two phrases are cited. The first is from the section entitled "The Work and Truth," and the second from "Truth and Art": "Das Werksein des Werkes besteht in der Be*streit*ung des *Streit*es zwischen Welt und Erde"; "der *Streit* is kein Riss als das Aufreissen einer blossen Kluft, sondern der *streit* ist die Innigkeit des Sichzugehörens der *Streitenden*."

19. "Regulations for the Admission of Gentlemen cadets into the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich," *Service Army List: Bengal*, vol. 2., military records.

20. Board's Collections 1819–1820; Extract Bengal Secret Consultations.

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the rudest times without the courage and all the depravity and treachery of the modern days without the knowledge or refinement." My particular example comes from the last paragraph of the letter: "I do not think," Ochterlony writes, "the restoration will be received so much as an obligation as a right, and I look forward to discontent and murmurs, if not turbulence . . . to any plan which does not give back the Territory unalienated, and the revenue undiminished in all its feudal relations."[21] Perhaps considering that the stake for the East India Company was the establishment and extension of its trading rights and its market, an enlightened analysis would have seen the so-called "restoration" as a right of the native kings. But I think it would be historically unsound to credit the syphilitic Rajah Kurrum Perkash [sic] of Sirmoor, of whom Ochterlony is writing, with such an enlightened perspective. What is more interesting to us is that, although the Territory was not given back unalienated, and the revenue was more than halved, once again the "native" (Kings)' subject-position rewrote itself as the position of the object of Imperialism. What was at first perceived as a right came to be accepted as obligation—as being obliged. This is now quite often the enlightened viewpoint that the victims of imperialism must feel nothing but an obligation in the long run. There is no need for the concept of a sociopolitical unconscious here. If we want to continue within the Freudian fantasy, we can say that this is the moment of secondary revision.

My third example concerns some deletions made to a letter to the Marquess of Hastings, Lord Moira, Governor-General-in-Council, by the Board of Control of the East India Company, drafted by its Committee on Correspondence in the Company's offices in Leadenhall Street in the City of London. If from Geoffrey Birch to David Ochterlony was a step up in class, from the Governor-General's Superintendent to the world where the Board of the Company corrects the Court as it reprimands the Governor-General is a leap into the stratosphere. This serves to re-emphasize the heterogeneity of the "Colonial Powers." We are once again witnessing the production of othering. Here the native states are being distinguished from "our [colonial] governments."

The minimal context is as follows: The Governor-General was allowing half-pay subalterns to serve with regular troops in Native governments. The Court of Directors drafted a letter to reprimand him. I find this passage interesting because it makes brutally visible the policy that is more often noticed in the more general arenas of ideological production like education, religious conversion, or accessibility to common law.

If the project of Imperialism is violently to put together the episteme that will "mean" (for others) and "know" (for the self) the colonial subject as history's nearly-selved other, the example of these deletions indicate explicitly what is always implicit: that meaning/knowledge intersects power. These deletions, disclosing the withdrawal of military training, are just as operative in fabricating an answer to the question: "Who is the native?" as my other ex-

21. Bengal Secret Correspondence, 27 September 1815.

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amples. The narrative of imperialism-as-history is especially intelligible because planned; and here, contrary to Foucault's suggestion, the "model of language [*langue*] and signs" is complicit with "that of war and battle."[22]

The passage cited below was drafted by the Court of Directors, and later expunged by the Board of Control of The East India Company. The actual letter received by the Governor, to be found in the National Archives in New Delhi, does not contain this passage:

> The first and main point in which you have erred has been in permitting Europeans not in the Company's service to remain in India. [This practice] would lead to an impolitic improvement of the Discipline of the Troops of Native Powers, and that too through the Agency of Officers who, as they are not subject to Martial Law, could not be adequately controlled by the Indian Governments [the East India Company's Governments in Bengal, Bombay, and Madras Presidencies]. The limited degree of science which it may be consistent with good policy to impart to the troops of native powers in alliance with the British government, should be imparted by officers in our own service: because from those officers only have we a sure guarantee that our intentions shall not be overstepped.[23]

The bold frankness of the passage comes through in the first reading. We must not forget that the Court of Directors at this time contained those very "saintly chairs," Charles Grant, Edward Parry, and others, whose obsession with the Christianizing of India is too well known to belabor. I am not so much concerned here with the policy of giving Christianity with one hand and ensuring military superiority with the other in this absolutely overt way, as with the strategy of the planned representation of master and native (an opposition with a different nuance from the more familiar master-servant). The master is the subject of science or knowledge. The science in question here is the "interested" science of war rather than "disinterested" knowledge as such. The manipulation of the pedagogy of this science is also in the "interest" of creating what will come to be perceived as a "natural" difference between the "master" and the "native"—a difference in human or racial material.

The Committee of Correspondence of the company let this bold passage pass. The Board of Control deleted it and simply ordered that the hiring out of subalterns be stopped. In the place of the deleted passages that I just read, they substituted the following:

> whatever may be your opinion upon the propriety of these orders, we desire that they may be implicitly obeyed: and we desire also that we may not again be placed in the painful alternative of either doing an act of apparent harshness or of acquiescing in an arrangement, not only made without our consent, but such as beforehand it must have been known that we should disapprove.

Continuing our Freudian or rather wild-psychoanalytical fantasy, we see here something approaching the willed emergence of a super-ego—a moment when

22. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972–1977*, transl. Colin Gordon, *et al.* (New York, 1980), 114.

23. Despatches to Bengal, vol. 82, collections 13,990–14,004, Draft Military Bengal, 8 December 1819.

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desire and the law must coincide. The analogy is of course imperfect: our desire is your law if you govern in our name, even before that desire has been articulated as a law to be obeyed.

My three examples announce, in various modes, (a) the installment of the glimpsed stranger as the sovereign subject of information—the agent an instrument: Captain Geoffrey Birch; (b) the reinscription of right as being-obliged—the agent the stereotype of the imperialist villain: Major-General Sir David Ochterlony; (c) the divided master in the metropolis issuing desire proleptically as law: the agent anonymous because incorporated. All three are engaged in producing an "other" text—the "true" history of the native Hill States.

III. MORE ON FREUD; OR, FREUD AS MONITORY MODEL FOR THE CRITIC'S DESIRE

Of the three great European critics of ideology and rationality—Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud—Freud is the only one who worked within an institution, and indeed worked to shape an institutional science. The conflict between the critique of rationality and the work to institutionalize animates the detail of Freud's text. There we can find a monitory model for our own desire, to practice and produce an "interested" critique *within academic disciplines*. By contrast, merely to locate a diagnostic taxonomy in psychoanalysis or to counter it by another is to ignore the fact that Freud problematizes any statement of method that would begin, putatively, "I choose because. . . . "

In the classic chapters on the dream-work in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud develops the notion of "over-determination" as the principle of fabrication of the images in the dream-text. When one reads a dream-text one cannot hold to a simple theory of a text as expression, where the cause of the expression is the fully self-present deliberative consciousness of the subject. It can therefore be suggested that in extending the notion of "determination" Freud is working within the philosophical tendency that focuses on determination rather than causality. When we are attempting to deal with as heterogeneous a fabrication as the imperialist representation of the empire, the notion of determinate representations is much more useful than that of deliberate or deliberate(d) cause. It is in this spirit that I turn briefly to Freud's discourse here, *not* because I wish to compare the text produced by imperialism to a dream.[24]

Freud customarily speaks of the over-determination of images in a dream-text as a telescoping of many determinations: *mehrfach determiniert*. In the section on "Means of Representation," however, Freud, still speaking of over-determination, uses the phrase "*anders determiniert*" (determined otherwise). The *quality* of the images in the dream-text is determined *otherwise* "by two independent moments [*Momente*]." Is Freud using the philosophically charged word "*Moment*," rendered into the more colloquial "factor" in the *Standard*

24. If there is a denegated "wish" operating this statement, it would be trivially interpretable.

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Edition, with any precision? We cannot know.[25] If we give Freud the stylist the benefit of the doubt, however, the two independent moments that determine the dream-text otherwise seem akin to different philosophical moments of appearance of consciousness. The first is our old friend "wish-fulfilment," where the psychic agency seems close to the deliberative consciousness that we colloquially identify as our "self." With respect to the second moment, Freud uses the word that covers for him when he wants to finesse the question of agency: "work." Let us note the hesitation and the economic metaphor in his language: "We shall not be altering the sense of this empirically based assertion if we put it in these terms: the greatest intensity is shown by those elements in a dream on whose imaging [*Bildung*] the fullest amount of condensation-work has been made use of [*die ausgiebigste Verdichtungsarbeit in Anspruch genommen wurde*]."[26] Who knows if Freud is correct? All we notice is that he is marking the site of a desire similar to ours: the desire to hold in *one* thought something like a wish *and* an economy. In the text being read, a desire not to assign blame to some monolithic near-deliberative "British" or "colonial power," and yet not to pretend that to understand is to forgive. "We may expect," writes Freud, "that it will eventually turn out to be possible to express this condition [*Bedingung*] and the other (namely relation to the wish-fulfilment) in a single formula."[27] He is not speaking of the type of image that constitutes the dream-text, but rather of the "transvaluation of all psychic value"[28] in this otherwise-determination. What better concept-metaphor could one find for the transvaluing discursive shifts I have looked at in those little bits of archival material that I have quoted?

Using the Freudian concept-metaphor as a formal model, then, I am going to suggest that to disclose only the race-class-gender determinations of social practices is to see overdetermination as only many determinations. If we notice that explanations and discourses are irreducibly fractured by the epistemic violence of monopoly imperialism, we begin to entertain the possibility of a determination whose ground is itself a figuration: a "determination otherwise." Of course Freud never speaks of imperialism. But the notion of figuration at the ground surfaces in the pervasive Freudian discourse of *Entstellung* or displacement as grounding in the emergence of significance.

IV. CLASS

Let us first consider the narrative of the modes of production. The historical

25. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, transl. James Strachey, *et al.* (London, 1961), IV, 330. It is worth remarking that in Hegel "determinate being [*Dasein*] is determinate being [what escapes the English translation, is the 'name' of determinate being determined in German]; its determinateness is determinateness-in-being [*seiende Bestimmtheit*], quality." (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, transl. A. V. Miller [New York, 1976], 109; italics author's). A discussion of the play between the Freudian *determinieren* and the Hegelian *bestimmen* would take us too far afield.

26. Freud, IV, 330.

27. *Idem.*

28. *Idem.*

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moment in our story would qualify as a not quite correct transitional space from semi-feudalism to capitalism, since the correct configurations are to be found only in Europe.

It is easily surmised that the company of United Merchants trading in the East Indies, otherwise known as the East India Company, prefigured the shifting relationship between state-formation and economic crisis-management within which we live today. The interest of the Company did not change by accident from a commercial to a territorial one. As the first great transnational company before the fact, it followed what seemed a necessary law and engaged in the business of state-formation. The East India Company produced the scandal of a misshapen and monstrous state which, although by definition chartered by the state of Britain, burst the boundaries of the metropolitan or mother-state. The governments of India were the *Company's* governments, the army the *Company's* army, attempts at legal re-inscription, the *Company's*. Indeed, the new cartography and the systemic normalization of India, of which the "settlement" of these Hill states is an account in miniature, was undertaken and established by the *Company*. My argument is supported by the fact that these undertakings found new vigor precisely when, beginning with the renewal of the Company's charter in 1813, its strictly commercial monopoly was whittled away.

What is generally noticed about this era is the much greater interest in education taken by the British Parliament after 1813. The material I have chosen to look at relates not to that more obvious arena of the consolidation of what was to become an imperial possession. They relate back to the *ad hoc* process of state-formation by focusing on the strategy of limning the frontier. Indeed, it may be suggested that this latter process bore the relation of a supplement to policy within the British State. The story of the regulation of *domestic* enterprise by the Crown and political parties is well known. The relationship between mercantilism and *foreign* trade remained significantly different. My argument, however, is somewhat tangential to considerations of mercantilism in relation to the East India Company. My focus is the necessary but almost incidental or clandestine *state*-formation that accompanied this process. My argument is thus also distinct from the official narrative of India's accession to nationhood through inclusion in the British Empire.[29] It is by the law of sup-

29. For the relationship between mercantilism and imperialism presented by disciplinary historiography, see Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy: the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism: 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Eng., 1970). The standard view is well enough summarized as follows: "The subject [of Protectionism] is therefore essentially connected with England, and is only incidentally connected with India" (P. J. Thomas, *Mercantilism and the East India Trade* [New York, 1965], v.).

When, in "The East Endia Company—Its History and Results" [1853], Marx comments on the conflict between the British Parliament and the Company, he too sees it as a version of the conflict of mercantilism. Necessarily lacking familiarity with late capitalist conflict between nation-states and multi- and transnationals, he describes the conflict as one between commerce and industry, between domestic and colonial manufacture: "Thus India became the battlefield in the contest of the industrial interest on the one side, and of the moneyocracy and oligarchy on the other. The

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plementarity (what seems a rupture is also a repetition), then, that we are confronted, not by the Company's empire, but by the Company's *state*, formed *ad hoc*, British by national adjective, not by proper name. Here the explanatory power of economics in the last instance was made crudely visible, even as the relative autonomy of the political led to improvised statecraft, to the monstrously invaginated state-within-a-state where the part was larger than the whole.

Percival Spear, one of the standard historians of India, analyzes this *ad hoc* state-formation simply from the point of view of India's lack of nationhood. This is, once again, to assume the growth-pattern in Europe, more particularly Britain, as the unquestioned norm, considering the problems only in the domestic context, emphasizing the normativity in the colonial. Here what is one narrativization of history is seen not only "as it really was," but implicitly "as it ought to be." Spear therefore looks at the vigorous cartographic reinscription after 1813 as partly due to the fact that "a victory of an Indian leader was a victory for himself; a victory of an English general was a victory for England." From this it is not difficult to write unproblematically about the years 1813–1818: "The time was thus ripe for a new start in India."[30] Here, in a "non-theoretical" context, a phrase as seemingly unproblematic as "new start" firmly covers over the contradiction between a mission to restore and a project to "world" a "world" that we have noticed earlier. My broader argument is that this contradiction is displaced into our own aporia between "tradition" and "development." In fact, even if the focus is England rather than India, it is possible to argue that the part (Indian administration) began to alter the nature of the whole (the home government) rather than necessarily vice versa.[31]

Let us return to the suggestion that the invaginated state makes crudely visible the "economic in the last instance." Here is a passage from another standard textbook, C. H. Philips's *The East India Company (1784–1834)*:

Any person who bought shares in the capital stock of the East India Company was denominated a Proprietor, and was permitted to attend the meetings of the General

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manufacturers, conscious of their ascendancy in England, ask now for the annihilation of these antagonistic powers in India, for the destruction of the whole ancient fabric of Indian government, and for the final eclipse of the East India Company." (Karl Marx, *Surveys From Exile*, transl. David Fernbach [New York, 1974], 315).

30. Percival Spear, *India: A Modern History* (Ann Arbor, 1972), 229, 235. Any extended consideration would "read" the "archives" in order to problematize common "factual" generalizations such as "exhaustion of the countryside," "general stagnation of life," and "social diseases" and raise the question of their overdetermined production, a strategy beyond the reach of the specializing undergraduate, the active unit of ideological production for whom such authoritative texts are written. The undoubtedly well-meant love and gratitude for "India" and "Indians" reflected in Spear's dedication consolidate its effectiveness. We have been arguing that "India" and "Indians," like all proper names, are "effects of the real," "representations," and should be read as such. Spear, dealing only in realities and facts, begins with a factual teleological narrative core, which he proceeds to expand in his book: "The purpose of this book is to portray the transformation of India under the impact of the West into a modern nation state" (Spear, *India*, 231–233, vii).

31. See for instance Christopher Hill, *Economic History of Britain* (New York, 1969), II, 216–220.

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Court of Proprietors. The possession of £500 stock entitled the holder to vote "in a show of hands"; possession of £1,000 stock gave the Proprietor one vote in a ballot, £3,000 two votes, £6,000 three votes, and £10,000 and upwards four votes, which was the maximum. A contemporary writer maliciously [and with a gratuitous bit of sexism at the end] described the General Court as "a popular senate; no distinction as to citizenship—the Englishman, the Frenchman, the American; no difference as to religion—the Jew, the Turk, the Pagan; no impediment as to sex—the old women of both sexes."

It is interesting to note that "Thackeray's *mulatto* heiress in *Vanity Fair* had three stars (or votes) to her name in the East India Proprietors' List."[32]

India did not become an *imperial* possession until the second half of the nineteenth century. By then the foundations of what we call "colonial production" were firmly in place. The East India Company was dissolved in 1858, a year *after* the Indian Mutiny.

The protracted history of the growing conflict between Their Majesties' governments and the Company seems familiar to the non-specialist in the context of current struggles between nations and transnationals, even as the specialist reminds us that the conflict emerged as a belated supplement to the earlier domestic conflict between the administrative machinery of mercantile interests on the one hand and the state on the other. By the celebrated India Act of 1784, Pitt sought to curb the Company. One of his chief achievements was the institution of the Board of Control, which would exercise a controlling influence on the Company. My last example in Section II illustrates this. The Court of Directors of the Company had written to *its* Governor-General: "The first and main point in which you have erred has been in permitting Europeans not in the *Company's* service to remain in India;" and the Board of Control, the part of the Company that stood for the putative whole, the British state, had substituted: "Whatever . . . the propriety of the orders *we* desire that they may be implicitly obeyed." Here the conflict between politics (the State) and economics (the Company) becomes abundantly clear. The East India Company is a paranational entity establishing its own political domain in an *ad hoc* way. Its indirect sphere of influence extends beyond Britain and India, into, for example, the fledgling United States.[33] The nation-state, the proper repository of centralized political power, aims at, and finally succeeds in, bringing it under its will. It is a prefiguration of the murderous and productive contradictions between politics and economics within which we live today. To define Colonialism as *either* rupture *or* continuity alone might thus be to reduce overdetermination to a species of determinism.

Of course the discourse available to the individual agents of the Company came from yet elsewhere. Both in the case of the permanent land settlement of the Company's possessions and in the case of "protected" native states like the Hill states, it was the discourse of feudalism that was readily at hand. Ochter-

32. C. H. Philips, *The East India Company (1784–1834)* (Manchester, Eng., 1961), 2.

33. For an account of the Company's American trade, see Philips, *East India Company*, 106–107, 156–158.

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lony in secret consultation writes to the Governor-General: "If there be a native government established it appears to his lordship that it ought to possess all the *visible* signs of sovereignty compatible with its feudal relation towards the British government, which may give it responsibility in the eyes of its subjects."[34]

An exquisite amalgam of the imagery of feudalism, mercantilism, and militarism, shadowily prefiguring the discourse of neocolonialism is to be found in a letter from John Adam to Ochterlony:

> You will remember that it was proposed to occupy the Kaardah Doon permanently for the Hon'bl Company. This possession besides its eventual importance in a military point of view might contribute to the general reimbursement of the expense which the British Government must necessarily incur. . . . and generally, to perform all the duties resulting from the feudatory relation in which they will stand towards us and to secure the free passage of our merchants and their goods through their respective territories, or else to define and enjoin all these duties and the corresponding obligations of protection and guarantee in a proclamation to be published throughout the territories under consideration.[35]

We have commented upon the thematics of obligation and duty in the previous section. The publication of a proclamation authenticates the factual bases of these pseudo-ethical requirements. The facts are seen as based on feudal axiomatics.[36] It is now possible to suggest that these mechanics of the constitution of "facts" are dissimulated in the official historical record—the book of facts—represented in my text by Spear's *India*.

The resort to feudal discourse can equally be supported by an inability or refusal to recognize the principle of commercial monopoly by territorial infringement when it was operated by the natives as a localized version of *their* so-called entitlement. Thus Geoffrey Birch to John Adam:

> I shall also beg leave to mention one species of oppression which I see no remedy for without putting government to some expense. Kalsee is the Mart for all the country lying between the Jumna and Tonse, and Merchandize is also frequently bought from Gurwal and Bussahir. As there is no place of shelter for the Traders to resort to, the Mahajens and Bunneahs of the town invite them to their houses, and I learn there is an understanding amongst them, that another shall not interfere with them in bidding for the merchandize in his house, consequently the trader is at his mercy as to the price, independent, of which he charges for the accommodation and for weighing or counting the goods.[37]

Birch "remedies" this oppression by introducing supervised and equitable weights and measures. Here indeed for a moment the discourse of classical Marxism seems to take on explanatory importance. For, even as a new cartography is being written on this disputed terrain, what is being introduced is ex-

34. Bengal Secret Correspondence, 2 August 1815.

35. Bengal Secret Correspondence, 22 May 1815.

36. For a discussion of social axiomatics, see Spivak, "Feminism and A Critique of Imperialism," forthcoming in *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985).

37. Board's Collections 1819–1820, Extract Bengal Secret Consultations, 12 November 1815.

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ploitation with no extra-economic coercion. Labor power is, as it were, being freed. Arrived here, however, the analysis must be complicated. For, to control the field of an indiscriminate "freeing" of labor power—as a preliminary prefiguration of the international division of labor—something happens which Western Marxist apologists for imperialism have not been able to account for: a phantasmatic discourse of *race* is deployed. Here my argument is, of course, that imperialism is *not* racial determinism in the last instance.

V. RACE

In order to construct the Rani of Sirmur as an object of knowledge, then, it should be grasped that she emerges in the archives because of the commercial/territorial interests of the East India Company. We have brought the discussion in the previous section to the point where it can be argued that the colonial context did not allow the emergence of the clean contours of a "working class."[38] This section will discuss briefly the deployment of the discourse of race.

On my way to the Rani, I must therefore stop for a moment on Robert Ross.

He was born in Perth in 1789. He arrived in India at age sixteen. He was truly a vulgar-fraction lad. He was a bit free-spirited in his dealings with the Company, and, when he died on the Cape in 1854, he was in some disfavor. What is important for us is that *this* was the boy who, between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-five, compiled a brief "Statistical and Geographical Memoir of the Hill Countries Situated Between the Rivers Tamas and Sutlej." *This* was the "authoritative" document constructed out of hearsay and interpreted conversations which, by the Court of Director's own admission in a dispatch to Bengal, obtained approval of the "restoration" of the ancient kingdoms in the hills.[39]

Ross's brief demographic analysis of the hills is that the *people* there are all "aboriginals of various kinds"; that the Sikhs, the Gurkhas, and the Moguls are varieties of "foreign yoke"; and that the rightful lords of the land are the Hindu chiefs about whose provenance or origin he is silent. This naive and phantasmatic race-differentiated historical demography is, curiously enough, identical in its broad outlines with the disciplinary Aryanist version of ancient India which Romila Thapar has so recently demystified.[40] What is at stake is a "worlding," the reinscription of a cartography that must (re)present itself as

38. In another context, Dipesh Chakrabarty has developed this argument meticulously. Chakrabarty, "Conditions for Knowledge of Working-Class Conditions: Employers, Government and the Jute Workers of Calcutta, 1890–1940," in *Subaltern Studies* II: *Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, 1983).

39. Despatches to Bengal, vol. 22, collections 13,990–14,004, Bengal Political Department, answers to letters, 10th, 12th and 28th December 1816; and quotation from Service Army List: Bengal, vol. 2, Military Records.

40. Romila Thapar, *Ancient India: A Textbook of History for Middle Schools* (New Delhi, 1975); *Medieval India: A Textbook of History for Middle Schools* (New Delhi, 1978).

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impeccable. I have written above of the contradiction involved in the necessary colonialist presupposition of an uninscribed earth. That uneasy contradiction is made visible in the Court's simultaneous acceptance as "evidence" of Ross's race-divisive unauthorized historical demography with a mild "suggestion," in the event ignored, "that he should give references to the authorities on which he founds his details, particularly the historical statements which he deduced from remote ages"; and their guarded refusal of such status to a "native" map: "This map, although being of Native hands, Sir David Ochterlony does not venture to rely on it, would have served to give us some idea."[41]

Even as Ross and Birch are hoping that it is the "aboriginal subjects" who will be transformed by the "extraction and appropriation of surplus-value with no extra-economic coercions" (free wage-labor) and by what today we would call "training in consumerism" (quite different from "raising the standard of living"—their phrase is "introducing imperceptibly a gradual improvement in the habits and manners of the people"),[42] it is the Hindu chiefs whose claims they endorse and authorize. The full ideological flowering of this authorization—the divisive deployment of the discourse of race—is to be seen in the correct but aesthetically indifferent verses composed by Sir Monier Monier-Williams seventy years later and inscribed on the doorway of the Indian Institute at Oxford, the last line of which runs: आर्यावर्तं giving to India the racist designation of the land of the Aryans, अङ्गलभूम्यीश्च giving to Britain the designation of the land of the Anglos, मिथो मैत्री विवर्धताम् may their mutual friendship constantly increase.

Even this racist appropriation was, of course, asymmetrical. One effect of establishing a version of the British system was the development of an uneasy separation between disciplinary formation in studies and the native, now alternative, tradition of "high culture." Within the former, the cultural explanations generated by authoritative scholars began to match the planned epistemic violence in the fields of education and the law.

I locate here not only the founding of the Indian Institute at Oxford in 1883, but also that of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, and the immense analytic and taxonomic work undertaken by scholars like Arthur Macdonnell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, who were both colonial administrators and organizers of the matter of Sanskrit. From their confident utilitarian-hegemonic plans for students and scholars of Sanskrit, it is impossible to guess at either the aggressive repression of Sanskrit in the general educational framework, or the increasing "feudalization" of the performative use of Sanskrit in the everyday life of Brahminical-hegemonic India. A version of history was gradually established in which the Brahmins were shown to have the same intentions toward the Hindu code as the codifying British: "In order to preserve Hindu society intact [the] successors [of the original brahmins] had to reduce everything to

41. Despatches to Bengal, Answer to Political Letter of 11 December 1816; dated 1 December 1819.

42. Board's Collections 1819–1820, Extract Bengal Secret Consultations, 27 October 1815.

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writing and make them more and more rigid. And that is what has preserved Hindu society in spite of a succession of political upheavals and foreign invasions."[43] This is the 1925 verdict of Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri, learned Indianist, brilliant representative of the indigenous elite within colonial production. To signal the asymmetry in the relationship between authority and explanation (depending on the race-class of the authority) compare this 1928 remark by Edward Thompson, English intellectual: "Hinduism was what it seemed to be. . . . It was a higher civilization that won [against it], both with Akbar and the English."[44] And add this, from a letter by an English soldier-scholar in the last decade of the last century: "The study of Sanskrit, 'the language of the gods' has afforded me intense enjoyment during the last 25 years of my life in India, but it has not, I am thankful to say, led me, *as it has some*, to give up a hearty belief in our own grand religion."[45]

Let us return to the case of Sirmur. Under the auspices of a race-divisive historiography, Robert Ross gives to each hill state an "original" undated outline, and then a second dated outline, generally marked with a seventeenth- or an eighteenth-century date. The project is to restore to each state the lineaments of this second origin. Yet, just as the argument for class-formation cannot be sufficient in this context, the argument from race-division will also be seen not to be so.

VI. GENDER

The project of the restoration of origin did not apply to Sirmur. As we approach Sirmur, we move from the discourses of class and race into gender—and we are in the shadow of shadows. The Raja of Sirmur, Karma Prakash, was deposed by the British. The ostensible reason given was that he was barbaric and dissolute. Since the accusation of barbarism was brought in the secret correspondence against many of these chiefs, that does not seem sufficient grounds for removal from the throne. The only remaining reason, then, was that he had syphilis, which I take to be his "loathsome disease." The Rani is established as the immediate guardian of the minor king Fatteh Prakash, her son, because there are no trustworthy male relatives in the royal house. This, too, seems somewhat implausible, since Geoffrey Birch rides around with a man from the House of Sirmur, Duleep Singh by name, whose astuteness he elaborately

43. Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection under the Care of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1925), III, viii.

44. Edward Thompson, *Suttee: A Historical and Philosophical Enquiry in to the Hindu Rite of Widow-Burning* (London, 1928), 130, 47.

45. Holograph letter (from G. A. Jacob to an unnamed correspondent) attached to inside front cover of the Sterling Memorial Library (Yale) copy of *The Mahanarayana-Upanishad of the Atharva-Veda with the Dipika of Narayana*, ed. Colonel G. A. Jacob (Bombay, 1888). Italics mine. Invocations of the peculiar dangers of this knowledge are a topos that belong to the race-differentiation that I am discussing in the text.

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praises. It is my conviction, although I cannot demonstrate it yet, that it was necessary to hold Sirmur under a child guarded by a woman, because the "dismemberment of Sirmoor" (as spelled out in a secret communication) was in the cards. The entire eastern half of Sirmur had to be annexed immediately, and all of it eventually, to secure the Company's trade routes and frontier against Nepal, to investigate the efficacy of "opening a commercial communication through Bussaher with the country beyond the snowy mountains."[46]

This, then, is why the Rani surfaces briefly, as an individual, in the archives; because she is a king's wife and a weaker vessel. We are not sure of her name. She is once referred to as Rani Gulani and once as Gulari. In general she is referred to, properly, as the Ranee by the higher officers of the Company, and "this Ranny" by Geoffrey Birch and Robert Ross.

Since woman is not a genitalist category, and because the women of royal houses have a special place, I must once again quote a bit of colonial discourse from Edward Thompson's *Suttee*.

The most detailed record of women's names in early colonial India is in the context of widow self-immolation. There are many lists of pathetically misspelled names of the *satis* of the artisanal, peasant, village-priestly, moneylender, clerical, and comparable social groups from Bengal, where *Satis* were most common. Consider in that frame Edward Thompson's words of praise for General Charles Hervey's appreciation of the problem of *Sati*:

> Hervey has a passage which brings out the pity of a system which looked only for prettiness and constancy in woman. He obtained the names of satis who had died on the pyres of Bikanir Rajas; they were such names as: "Ray Queen, Sun-ray, Love's Delight, Garland, Virtue Found, Echo, Soft Eye, Comfort, Moonbeam, Love-lorn, Dear Heart, Eye-play, Arbour-born, Smile, Love-bud, Glad Omen, Mist-clad, or Cloud-sprung—the last a favourite name."[47]

There is no more dangerous pastime than transposing proper names into common nouns, translating them, and using them as sociological evidence. I attempt to reconstruct the names on that list and begin to feel Hervey-Thompson's arrogance. What, for instance, might "Comfort" have been? Was it "Shanti"? Readers are reminded of the last line of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. There the word bears the mark of one kind of stereotyping of India—the grandeur of the ecumenical *Upanishads*. Or was it "Swasti"? Readers are reminded of the *swastika*, the brahmanic ritual mark of domestic comfort (as in "God Bless Our Home") stereotyped into a criminal parody of Aryan hegemony. Between these two appropriations, where is our pretty and constant burnt widow? The aura of the names owes more to writers like Edward Fitzgerald, the "translator" of the *Rubayyat of Omar Khayyam*, who helped to construct a certain picture of the oriental woman through the supposed "objec-

46. Despatches to Bengal, Answer to Political Letter, 11 December 1816, dated 1 December 1819.
47. Thompson, *Suttee*, 132.

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tivity" of translation, than to sociological exactitude.[48] By this sort of reckoning, the translated proper names of a random collection of contemporary French philosophers, or Board of Directors of prestigious Southern U. S. corporations would give evidence of a ferocious investment in an archangelic and hagiocentric theocracy.

Against such olympian violations of women's names we have the meticulously preserved baptismal records of each and every cadet in the Company's service. Where no baptismal certificate could be located, there is an impressive array of legal attestations to establish identity. The general argument of the book of which this is a part underscores woman's instrumentality. A title and a vaguely sketched first name will suffice for the king of Sirmur's wife because of the specific purpose she is made to serve. According to the first Charter, "the executive authority was to be in the Ranee and the Constitutive Officers of the Government subject to the control and direction of Captain Birch acting under the orders of Sir David Ochterlony on the part of the British Government, [and] the Military Defence of the Country was to devolve on the British Government."

Only two specific acts of hers are recorded. As soon as she is strictly separated from her deposed and banished husband, his other two wives, who had been parceled off to yet another place for fear of intrigue, ask to come back to her household and are received. Soon after, she remembers a great-aunt with whom her husband had long ago quarrelled and re-institutes a pension for her. She is astute, however, for she allocates Rs. 900, but promises Rs. 700 at first because she knows that Auntie will ask for more. These events are recorded because they cost money. "It has been necessary for Captain Birch," Ochterlony writes, "occasionally to interfere with her authoritatively to counteract the facility of the Ranee's disposition."[49] We imagine her in her simple palace, separated from the authority of her no doubt patriarchal and dissolute husband, suddenly managed by a young white man in her own household. Such examples must be accommodated within the epistemic violence of the worlding of worlds that I have described above. For this too is the sudden appearance of an alien agent of "true" history in native space. There is no romance to be found here. I will suggest in a moment that, caught thus between patriarchy and imperialism, she is almost in an allegorical predicament.

And then the Rani suddenly declares her intention to be a *Sati*. One cannot accuse Geoffrey Birch of reporting on the Rani too leniently. Therefore it is particularly noticeable that he is obliged to use the language of affect when he does report this to the Resident in Delhi:

> This Ranny appears to be completely devoted to her husband, of which you may greatly judge by the following conversation which took place in a conference I had with her sometime ago [sic] she observed, that "her life and the Rajah's are one" which I conse-

48. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978) remains the authoritative text here.
49. Secret Consultations, Adani to Ochterlony, 22 May 1815.

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quently concluded to allude to her intention of burning herself at his death, so I replied, she should now relinquish all thoughts of doing so, and devote herself to the love of her son and live for him. She said to the effect, that it was so decreed and she must not attend to advice deviating from it: so I conclude, she has resolved upon sacrificing herself.[50]

And now begins the tale of a singular manipulation of her private life. (I am aware of the problems with introducing a notion of "private life" into this context. Let us assume it as a name for whatever it is that is being maneuvered in the "separation of interests" between indigenous patriarchy and colonial government.) "I should consider a very grateful office, if Government may think proper to authorize my interference to prevent the Ranny fulfilling her intention. The best mode of effecting it would probably present itself on the occasion, but I should feel great satisfaction by being honored with any regulation from government for my conduct upon it."

In an earlier chapter of the book of which this is a part, I have analyzed the Brahminical discourse of widow sacrifice: beginning with moments from its so-called authority in the *Rg-Veda*, through the admonitory texts of the *Dharma sastra*, the legal sanctions of the sixteenth century and after; and concluded that it was a manipulation of female *subject*-formation by way of a constructed counter-narrative of woman's consciousness, thus woman's being, thus woman's being-good, thus the good woman's desire, thus woman's desire; so that, since *Sati* was not the invariable rule for widows, this sanctioned suicide could paradoxically become the signifier of woman as exception. On the other hand, I suggest that the British ignore the space of *Sati* as an ideological battleground, and construct the woman as an *object* of slaughter, the saving of which can mark the moment when not only a civil but a good society is born out of domestic chaos. Between patriarchal subject-formation and imperialist object-constitution, it is the dubious place of the free will of the sexed subject as female that is successfully effaced. Here I append a brief summary of my argument:

For the female "subject," a sanctioned self-immolation within Hindu patriarchal discourse, even as it takes away the effect of "fall" attached to an unsanctioned suicide, brings praise for the act of choice on another register. By the inexorable ideological production of the sexed subject, such a death can be understood by the female subject as an *exceptional* signifier of her own desire, exceeding the general rule of a widow's conduct. The self-immolation of widows was not *invariable* ritual prescription. *If however, the widow does decide thus to exceed the letter of ritual*, to turn back is a transgression for which a particular type of penance is prescribed. When before the era of abolition, a petty British police officer was obliged to be present at each widow-sacrifice to ascertain its "legality," to be dissuaded by him after a decision was, by contrast, a mark of real free choice, a choice of freedom. Within the two contending ver-

50. Board's Collections 1819–1820, Extract Bengal Secret Consultations, Copy of a letter from Birch to Metcalfe included in Metcalfe to Adam, 5 March 1816.

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sions of freedom, the constitution of the female subject *in life* was thoroughly undermined.

These years were also the time when the British were assiduously checking out the legality of *Satis* by consulting pundits and priests. (In the event, when the law abolishing *Sati* was written, the discourse was once again the race-divisive one of the bestial Hindu versus the noble Hindu, the latter being represented as equally outraged by the practice as the British.)

For obvious reasons, the Rani was not susceptible to these general moves toward *Sati*. Saving *her* could not provide the topos of the founding of a good society. As we have argued, restoration of Aryan authority combined in contradiction with the proto-proletarianization of the aborigine had already filled that requirement. She could not be offered the choice to choose freedom. She was asked to live for her son; and she responded from within her patriarchal formation. She must not be allowed to perform even a "legal" *sati*, and, therefore, for her, pundits could not be consulted to produce the proper patriarchal legal sanction. In her case, the pundits must be coerced to produce *expedient* advice. Here discursive representation almost assumes the status of analysis, although, if one begins to wonder what "every means of influence and persuasion" might mean, that confidence begins to waver.

Here is the Governor's Secretary's letter to the Resident:

> The question referred is one of great delicacy and has attracted a proportionate share of the attention of the Governor General in Council. The general practice of the British Government of abstaining from authoritative interference in matters so closely allied to the religious prejudice of natives among its own subjects, must be considered to be peculiarly incumbent on it with reference to persons of the Ranee's condition in life. . . . The considerations which in all cases must influence the Government . . . are powerfully aided by the peculiar circumstances of the Ranee's situation and *the political importance of the continued exercise by her of the administration of the Raj of Sirmore during the minority of Rajah Futteh Perkash*. While, therefore, the Governor General in Council cannot direct any authoritative or compulsory inteference in this case, His Lordship in Council is ardently desirous, that every means of influence and persuasion should be employed to induce the Ranee to forgoe her supposed determination. His Lordship in Council is induced to hope, that the circumstance of her being actually engaged in the administration of the Government of her Son, the acknowledged importance of her continuing to perform the public functions of belonging to that situation, together with the actual *separation of interests* which must now be deemed to subsist between her and her husband, may, if explained and represented with suitable skill and address to the Pundits and Brahmins whose authority is likely to sway the Ranee's opinion, lead to such a declaration on their part as would satisfy her mind and lead her to adopt a different resolution. . . . The Governor General in Council authorises Captain Birch to refuse to convey any message from Kurram Pergash [her husband] to the Ranee [to the effect that she should acompany him to a more distant place of banishment], and to signify to him as well as to the Ranee herself . . . that the paramount duty of watching over the interests of the minor Rajah and his subjects must supersede any obligation of duty toward her husband which under other circumstances might render her complying with his wishes expedient and proper.

(I should mention here that "paramount" is the epithet invariably associated with imperial power.) In the last sentence of the letter, authority annuls itself

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most strongly by vesting the agent: "Captain Birch will accordingly interpose to prevent the Rannee's removal from Sirmore without the consent of the Governor General in Council."[51]

But had Captain Birch read the Rani right? Did she after all merely want to be with her husband and leave her colonized prison palace? If Birch is reading her motive and desire wrong, it is an example of critical subject-predication being practiced in a crude though successfully oppressive way. The next few letters in the secret consultations merely defer the Rajah's further banishment, almost as if not to test the Rani's resolution.

And there the matter is dropped.

The present provisional end of the story will be familiar to anyone who has researched in collections of records. Yet I do want to dwell on this all too familiar phenomenon to note the pattern of exclusions that makes the familiar function as such. As the historical record is made up, who is dropped out, when, and why? We remind ourselves of the meticulously tabulated cadets whose existence is considered "reasonable" enough for the production of the account of history. The Rani emerges only when she is needed in the space of imperial production.

I had kept some time in London to find out if the Rani did burn herself. I looked at a broader spread of the political and secret correspondence with India, at the Crown Representative Records, at the Residency Records, at a set of Privy Council Appeals and at Bengal Proceedings in general. The Rani is not in any of these things. In the era of abolition a Royal Sati would have been an embarrassment.

I intend to look a little further, of course. As the archivist assured me with archivistic glee: it *will* be a search. It seems appropriate that the trip to India will be made possible by two Conferences, on sexual difference and the construction of race respectively, in Britain and Australia. I will go to the National Archives. But I will go also to Sirmur.

In the decades after the "settlement" the violent re-territorialization of the Simla Hills gradually faded into the production of a summer retreat for the new civil service. That is how Simla is written into the mythography of colonial India. (Any extended study should consider this inscription in archeological terms, and with an eye to how early photography authoritatively established the "reality" of the new landscape.[52]) Two great-aunts of an American friend, her-

51. Board's Collections 1819–1820, Adam to Metcalfe.

52. I am grateful to Professors Andrew Szegedy-Maszak and Clark Maines for these suggestions. The contradictions between the necessary assumption of reinscribed earth for the worlding of a world would be illuminated by such considerations. I intend to pursue this line of study further. Here suffice it to quote two representative passages from these records of the "settlement" of these states: "The village . . . from the Valley having been deserted and [the] land neglected since the grain was destroyed by our army during the war (when by Captain Wilson's list there were one hundred and ninety-four Beegahs [about sixty-five acres] in cultivation) he [the landowner] could with difficulty show me the boundary of those fields overgrown like the surrounding soil with high grass" (Board's Collections 1814–1819, Birch to Metcalfe). "When the Zemindars [landowners] of Gughurry are convinced that the arrangement made is not to be changed to gratify their humour,

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self now a woman in her late sixties, lived in the Simla Hills in the 1880s. Their extraordinary sweetness to their simple native servants and congregation, and their joy in those highlands are recorded in diaries that my friend discovered some years ago. She goes to Simla periodically to re-enact their diaries, and to establish a text of American feminism. Here is another overdetermination, even perhaps a palimpsest. How can you judge those sweet and upright elderly American spinsters except as they were remotely operated themselves by a textualization that violated my Rani? They had already accepted that recently worlded world as a "sensuous [reality]. . . given direct *unmittelbar*—with no mediation or 'worlding'—from all eternity."[53] The greatest personal goodwill of the unwitting benevolent imperialist is inscribed in this error.

I have never been to those hills. My own class provenance was not such as to allow summer vacations in so fashionable a resort area. This first trip will be an act of *private* piety. I want to touch the Rani's picture, some remote substance of her, if it can be unearthed. But the account of her representation is enough for the book. To retrieve her as information will be no disciplinary triumph. Caught in the cracks between the production of the archives and indigenous patriarchy, today distanced by the waves of hegemonic "feminism," there is no "real Rani" to be found.

But there is something else that works against disciplinary satisfaction in retrieving the Queen of Sirmur. I will invoke once again that prefiguration of the current crises of capital caught between the nation and the globe. In its current figuration it traces out the international division of labor. The lives and deaths of the paradigmatic victims of that division, the women of the urban sub-proletariat and of unorganized peasant labor, are not going on record in the "humanist" academy even as we speak.[54]

VII. POSTSCRIPT

Theoreticist purist friends in Britain and the United States have found in this paper too much concern with "historical realism," too little with "theory." I remain perplexed by this critique. I hope a second reading will persuade them that my concern has been with the fabrication of representations of historical reality.

At the other end of the spectrum, custodians of Critical Thought ask "what sort of society could ever be grounded in" what their cursory and "interested"

I have not a doubt but they will soon be reconciled, or at least prefer their Native Hills to a transfer to uncultivated Land in Surmoor [sic]." (Board's Collections 1814–1819, Ochterlony to Birch).

53. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part One, transl. C. J. Arthur (New York, 1973), 62.

54. For elaboration on the notion that these women are the paradigmatic subject of microelectronic capitalism, see "The Production of 'Post-modernism': Rei Kawakubo's Minimalist Aesthetic," forthcoming in a collection from the University of Sydney Press; and "The Politics of 'Feminist Culture'," forthcoming in *Praxis International*.

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reading reduces to "the linguistic nihilism" associated with deconstruction.[55] A careful deconstructive method, displacing rather than only reversing oppositions (such as here between colonizer and colonized) by taking the investigator's own complicity into account—I remind the reader of my use of Freud as monitory model—does not wish to officiate at the grounding of societies, but rather to be the gadfly who alone may hope to take the distance accorded to a "critical" "thought."

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55. Kenneth Asher, "Deconstruction's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche," *Telos* 62 (Winter 1984–1985), 175.

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